

THE
HISTORY
OF
SAWNEY BEANE

And his FAMILY,
ROBBERS and MURDERERS,

Who took up their abode in a Cave near to the Sea-side, where they lived Twenty-five Years without so much as once going to visit any City, Town, or Village.

How they robbed above One Thousand Persons, and murdered and eat all whom they robbed.

How at last they were happily discovered by a Pack of Blood-hounds, and how SAWNEY BEANE, his Wife, Eight Sons, Six Daughters, Eighteen Grand-Sons, and Fourteen Grand-Daughters, were all seized and executed, by being cast alive into three Fires, and there burnt to Death.

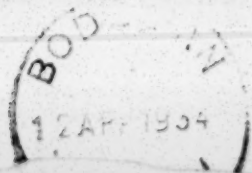
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HISTORY of SAWNEY BEANE.

THE following account, though as well attested as any historical fact can be, is almost incredible, for the monstrous and unparalleled barbarities that it relates; there being nothing that we ever heard of with the same degree of certainty that may be compared with it, or that shews how far the brutish temper, untamed by education and knowledge of the world may carry a man in such glaring and horrible colours.

Sawney Beane was born in the county of East Lothian about eight or nine miles eastward of the city of Edinburgh, some time in the reign of Queen Elizabeth whilst King James I. governed Scotland. His parents worked at hedging and ditching for their livelihood, and brought up their son to the same occupation. He got his daily bread in his youth by these means; but being very much addicted to idleness and not chusing to be confined to any honest employment he left his father and his mother, and ran away into the desert part of the country, taking with him a woman, as viciously inclined as himself. These two took their habitation in a rock by the sea-side



side on the shore of the county of Galloway where they lived upwards of twenty-five years, without going into any city, town, or village.

In this time they had a great number of children and grand children, whom they brought up after their own manner, without the least notion of humanity or civil society. They never kept any company but among themselves, and supported themselves by robbing; being moreover so very cruel, they never robbed any one whom they did not murder.

By this bloody method, and their living so retiredly from the world, they continued a long time undiscovered, there being no body able to guess how the people were lost who went by the place where they lived. As soon as they had robbed and murdered any man, woman, or child, they used to carry off their carcases to their den, where cutting them into quarters, they would pickle the mangled limbs, and afterwards eat them, these being their only subsistence.

All the people in the adjacent parts were alarmed at so uncommon a loss of their neighbours, for there was no travelling safely near the den of these wretches. This occasioned spies to be sent into those parts; many of whom never returned again; and those that did, after the strictest search and enquiry, could not find out how these melancholy matters happened.

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There were several honest travellers taken up on suspicion, and wrongfully hanged; several innocent innkeepers were executed for no other reasons than that the persons, who had been thus lost, were known to have lain at their houses; which occasioned suspicion of their being murdered by them, and their bodies privately buried in obscure places, to prevent a discovery. Thus an ill-placed justice was executed with the greatest severity imaginable, in order to prevent their frequent atrocious deeds; so that not a few innkeepers, who lived on the western road in Scotland, left off their business, for fear of being made examples of, and followed other employments. This on the other hand, occasioned many great distress for want of accommodation for themselves and their horses, when they were disposed to bait, or to put up for lodging at night: in a word, the whole country was almost depopulated.

Sawney's family was at last grown very large; and every branch as soon as able helped in perpetrating their wicked deeds, which they followed with impunity: sometimes they would attack four or five or six footmen together, but never more than two on horseback. They were also very careful that none should escape; an ambuscade being on every side, to secure them every way. How then was it possible they should be detected, when not
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one that saw them perceived any body afterwards? The place they inhabited was solitary and lonesome; and when the tide came up it went near two hundred yards into their cave, which reached almost a mile under ground; so that when some had been sent armed, they have passed by the mouth of the cave without any notice, not supposing any human creature would live in such a place of horror

The number of people they destroyed was never exactly known; but was computed, that in twenty-five years they had murdered at least one thousand men, women, and children. And the manner they were at last discovered was as follows:

A man and his wife behind him on the same horse, coming one evening home from a fair, and falling into an ambuscade made by those merciless wretches, they attacked him in a furious manner. The man, to save himself, fought bravely, riding some of them down by main force; but in the conflict the poor woman fell from behind him, and was instantly murdered before his face, the female cannibals cutting her throat, and sucking her blood with as great a gust as though it had been wine. This done, they ripped her up, and pulled out her entrails; which dismal spectacle caused the man to be so enraged that he redoubled his efforts. Mean while it pleased Providence that while

he was engaged with them there came up together in a body between twenty or thirty men, which, when Sawney Beane saw, he and his blood-thirsty crew immediately withdrew, and made the best of their way through a very thick wood to their den.

This man being the first that ever fell in their way and came off alive: he told the company what had happened, and shewed them the mangled body of his wife, which the murderers had dragged out of the road, but had not time to carry it off. They were struck with amazement, and went immediately to the provost of Glasgow, who immediately sent to the King.

In about two or three days his Majesty in person, with a body of about four hundred men, set out for the place where these tragedies were acted, in order to find out this hellish crew, which had so long been a nuisance to that part of the kingdom.

The man who had been attacked was the guide, and care was taken to have a large number of the best blood hounds, that no human means might be wanting to put an end to those barbarous cruelties.

No sign of habitation was found for a long time; and even when they came to the cave of these wretches, they took no notice of it, but were going to pursue their search along the shore,

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shore, the tide being then out ; but some of the blood hounds luckily entered the cave, and set up such a hideous barking, howling, and yelping, that the King and his attendants came back and looked into it, but could not think that any human creature could there be concealed. Nevertheless, as the blood hounds went further in, they increased their noise, and refused to come back ; torches then were immediately ordered, and a great many men entered through the most intricate windings, until they came to the private recess of these inhuman murderers.

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Then the whole body of them went in, and saw the dismal sight, and were ready to sink into the earth to see such a number of arms, legs, thighs, hands, and feet of men, women, and children, hung up in rows like dried beef, and a great many in pickle. They also found a quantity of money, watches, rings, swords, pistols, and a large quantity of cloaths and other things, which they had taken from those that they had murdered.

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Sawney's family at this time consisted of himself, his wife, eight sons, six daughters, eighteen grandsons, and fourteen granddaughters, begotten in incest.

They were all seized and pinioned, and then they took what human flesh they could find, and buried it in the sands ; and taking all the spoil,

they returned to Edinburgh with the prisoners, the country flocking round to see this murdering tribe. When they came to Edinburgh they were all committed to the Talboth, and the next day conducted under a strong guard to Leith, where they were all executed without any process, it being needless to try any creatures who were such professed enemies to mankind.

The men had first their privy members cut off and thrown into the fire before their faces; then their hands and legs were cut off, by which amputation they bled to death in some hours.

The wife, daughters, and grand children, having been made spectators of this just punishment inflicted on the men, were burnt to death in three several fires. They all died without the least sign of repentance, and continued cursing and venting the most horrid imprecations to the last gasp of breath.

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